

## Raised in the Church 6-1-14 AM

Paul's letter to the Roman churches of Christ describe two branches in the tree that is a congregation. One branch was the Jewish branch. It was native to the root, raised from the root (Romans 3:1-6). they had known God from the start, even before they made the decision to come to Christ. They had never worshipped idols, walked in paganism, or defiled themselves regularly.

The other branch was the Gentile branch. It is described as being grafted on in Romans 11:17-24. This means that they were not raised to know God, but came afterwards. The Scriptures describe such as "sinners by nature". Such language is an overly dramatic representation of the idea that a Gentile was not raised to know God, and only came to that knowledge after a lifetime of disobedience (I Peter 4:3).

Paul said that these groups each faced a particular problem in coming to Christ. In I Corinthians 1:23 we are told that the Gentile had to overcome the "foolishness" of Christianity, and the Jew had to overcome the "Stumbling block" of Christianity. That is to say, the Gentile needed to agree that right and wrong existed at all, and the Jew needed to find out that righteousness was not found in the Law of Moses.

Is there a parallel to this situation today? Perhaps there is, as we are still a church that contains two types of Christians. We have those who have come in from youth (such as Timothy – II Timothy 1:5, 3:14-17), whom we refer to sometimes as "raised in the church". We have those who have come in as adults (such as Cornelius – Acts 10:1-2). One thing both desire: that their children/grandchildren can grow up "raised in the Church". We all agree in fact that this is a unified foremost goal in Christ.

Why is it then that it seems so many "raised in the church" fail so often? Perhaps it is the same stumbling block as faced by the Jews in Christ in Rome. It is a stumbling block of sin and grace, so to speak.

A Stumbling Block of Sin: Sometimes those who were "raised in the church" have a mind that does not recognize the sinfulness of sin. They were likely baptized at the age of understanding, and may not have lived what we would call "worldly" lives. Such may need to consider the truth that sin is sin; all sin leads to total condemnation (Romans 3:1-9). Israel was not permitted to enter the promised land due to a number of terrible sins, including idolatry, pagan fornication, and open rebellion. Yet Moses was forbidden to enter for striking a rock. We might see these two examples as extreme differences, but in regards to sin, they are the same.

A Stumbling Block of Grace: Sometimes "raised in the church" have a mind that does not recognize the great value of divine Grace. Despite the position of never really having delved into sin, having lived a life from birth devoted to God, Grace is still the exclusive means of salvation. As tied to the previous point, sin is sin, and Grace is the only means to salvation.

Perhaps there is a parallel today to the Roman situation 2000 years ago. If so, all of us need to embrace the idea that Salvation is by Grace, not by merit. We are a recovery group of former sinners, and one condition is no better than another. We need to accept the need of Grace.